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# LAST SUPPER

Significance in the  
Upper Room

ROBERT H. KENNETT D.D.

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THE LAST SUPPER

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# THE LAST SUPPER

## Its Significance in the Upper Room

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## The Last Supper

IN view of the great number and diversity of Biblical problems which stimulate research and are freely discussed at the present day, it is somewhat strange that the Institution of the Holy Communion, *as it is recorded in the New Testament*, is in general comparatively ignored. This is certainly not due to any lack of interest in the sacrament itself among theologians, whatever type of Christianity they represent; for on no subject has more painstaking investigation been lavished than on the Holy Communion. The ritual and prayers, in all their developments, with which it has been celebrated have been systematically noted and compared; the doctrine of the Holy Communion in every age and in every part of Christendom has been studied with meticulous care. But though investigation is carried back to the early days of the Church it seldom goes back quite to the beginning; and even if account is taken of the administration of the Holy Communion in the

Apostolic age, the Institution itself receives scanty treatment beyond mere textual criticism and discussion as to which of the records preserved to us most correctly represents the earliest and most authentic tradition of what took place in the Upper Room. The *rationale* of the Institution, the meaning which the mysterious reference to a Body and Blood would bear to the assembled disciples, these things are passed over. The Church of England presents no *official* exposition of them either in the Church Catechism or in the Articles or in the Liturgy. Considering how far removed from all ordinary English ideas are phrases suggesting the eating of a human Body and the drinking of human Blood, it is surely strange that the Church Catechism merely states that "the inward part, or thing signified" in the Holy Communion is "the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper," and leaves it at that, not attempting to suggest in what sense or in what way "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls" can be brought about "by the Body and Blood of Christ."

This strange reticence on so important a matter can scarcely be due to reverence, for

reverence has not prevented as minute an examination of everything connected with the Incarnation of our Lord as was ever conducted in a lecture room set apart for the teaching of anatomy. Among traditionalists who adopt an absolutely literal interpretation of our Saviour's words there is, of course, no room for discussion on such a matter ; among members of the Reformed Churches, however, the reticence seems to be due to unformed opinion and timidity. Indeed, the latter cause is to a large extent the outcome of the former. Fear of being dubbed heretic has caused many a man to take refuge in the non-committal statement of Queen Elizabeth :

" 'Twas God the Word that spake it,  
He took the Bread and brake it ;  
And what the Word did make it,  
That I believe and take it."

Under the circumstances therefore it is scarcely surprising if the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has little meaning for a very large number of people who belong to the Reformed Churches, and who are by no means irreligious. The phraseology of the Sacrament bears no relation to ordinary modes of thought. The words of Institution, if literally interpreted, appear to



state what is self-evidently impossible ; if they are understood as metaphorical, the metaphor seems to bear no relation to fact. The mediæval theologians indeed in formulating the doctrine of Transubstantiation made a courageous effort to bring their religious language into harmony with their philosophy ; they were far more reasonable than some of their successors, who continue to hold fast to the dogma of Transubstantiation, although the philosophy on which that dogma rests is exploded. Protestants, on the other hand, while rejecting Transubstantiation and the even more intellectually difficult Consubstantiation, too often refrain from attempting to find any more satisfactory solution of the problem, taking refuge in the assertion that the Saviour's Institution is a "mystery."

Such an assertion, however, is in effect to represent the Holy Communion as altogether out of harmony with the whole work of Christ. The whole *raison d'être* of the Incarnation was not *mystery* in the ordinary sense of the word, but *revelation*. Mystery there must be in every statement about God, for it is a mere truism to say that our finite intellects cannot attain to the inscrutable things of God. Christ, however,

came not to obscure, but to reveal the Father ; and we have therefore no right to import into any of His utterances any mystery over and above that which is inherent therein by reason of the fact that it deals with the Divine. The words " This is My Body " are, and were intended to be, just as simple—and just as mysterious—as " Our Father which art in heaven " : simple, for they were meant to be intelligible to simple people ; mysterious, inasmuch as they refer to the Everlasting Son of the Father.

And therefore not only have we no need to be afraid to inquire what meaning the Saviour's words would have conveyed to us, if as devout Jews we could have been present in the Upper Room ; it is our bounden duty so to do. In God's service we must put away intellectual indolence as well as faithless timidity. That attitude of mind which would shirk inquiry is not faith, but credulity.

It has been the belief of the Church from the Apostolic age onwards that the Holy Communion was instituted by the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed. It is reasonable therefore to begin our investigation by inquiring what night this was. The first three Gospels identify it with the night on

which the Passover was eaten.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, however, the Synoptic Evangelists do not record a single feature of the Meal in the Upper Room which was *peculiar* to the Passover. There is no mention of the lamb, nor indeed of any sort of flesh, nor of unleavened bread. Bread and wine would be upon the table at every meal, and there is nothing to imply that when our Lord took the cup, it was a cup which, up to that time, possessed any special ritual significance.<sup>2</sup> S. Matthew and S. Mark mention the singing of one or more psalms,<sup>3</sup> and these have commonly been identified with the psalms sung at the Passover meal; there is, however, nothing in the Gospel narratives to necessitate such an identification; for we surely need not suppose that the singing of psalms by our Lord and His Apostles never took place except on occasions when such a thing was ritually obligatory. When S. Paul bade the Colossian Christians teach and

<sup>1</sup> "The first day of unleavened bread" (S. Mark xiv. 12) is evidently a phrase in accordance with *general*, and not with Jewish technical usage.

<sup>2</sup> S. Paul's words, "In like manner the cup after supper" (1 Cor. xi. 25), naturally mean "the cup which is the archetype of that of which we partake."

<sup>3</sup> ἐμνήσαντες.



admonish one another with "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. iii. 16), he was not concerned with the formal gatherings of the Church, but with the ordinary behaviour of believers; and if in S. Paul's days psalms were sung on ordinary occasions by those who were not Jews by birth, there is surely no difficulty in supposing that at a slightly earlier date they would have been sung by devout Jews.

On the other hand, the testimony of the Fourth Gospel is emphatic against the identification of the Last Supper with the Passover. The opening words of the account of the Supper state that it was "before the feast of the Passover"; the disciples understood our Lord's words to Judas to mean that the latter should at once buy what things were necessary for the feast; and on the occasion of the trial before Pilate the Jews "entered not into the Prætorium that they might not be defiled, but might keep the Passover." Further, all the Evangelists relate incidents which are far more in harmony with the supposition that the Last Supper was eaten on the night before the day on which the Passover lambs were killed than with the date to which the Synoptists assign it. Thus, S. Mark (xiv. 1) asserts that the chief

priests and scribes were anxious not to arrest Jesus during the feast ; the release of a prisoner at Passover time would more naturally precede the actual beginning of the feast than take place when the more important part of the celebration was over ; on Passover night neither our Lord and His Apostles nor the chief priests and other Jews would have been out of doors. Moreover, a natural explanation has been given of the error in the Synoptist's accounts.<sup>4</sup> S. Luke (xxii. 15) states that when our Lord sat down to the Last Supper, He said, " With desire I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," etc.<sup>5</sup> This sentence, of which the latter part is parallel to S. Mark xiv. 25, is doubtless part of the original tradition of the Last Supper, and the phrase " this Passover " came to be understood as meaning " this meal on the table," instead of " this Passover which is to be celebrated to-morrow."

Concluding therefore that our Lord's betrayal took place on the night before the Passover, we may go on to consider the Last Supper

<sup>4</sup> See articles by Dr. F. C. Burkitt and Dr. A. E. Brooke, *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. ix., pp. 569-572.

<sup>5</sup> ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν, κ.τ.λ.

itself, and, more especially, the Institution of the Holy Communion. Of both the Last Supper and the Institution we have four accounts: the former is recorded in all four Gospels; the latter in the three Synoptic Gospels, and also in 1 Cor. xi., where (*v.* 20) the rite is called "the Lord's Supper."<sup>6</sup> In addition to the passages referred to above, the Holy Communion is also mentioned in 1 Cor. x. 16 ff., Acts ii. 42 and 46, xx. 11, and perhaps in S. Luke xxiv. 30 ff.

It is not necessary at this point to discuss the remarkable divergence between S. John's account of the Last Supper and that of the other Evangelists. It is sufficient to mention that the Fourth Gospel represents the Feet-washing as taking place during supper and before Jesus' declaration that one of the Twelve would betray Him, and omits all reference to the Institution; whereas none of the Synoptists mention the Feet-washing, and SS. Matthew and Mark place the questioning as to the traitor before the Institution.

In date of writing, though not necessarily in substance, the earliest account of the Institution is contained in 1 Cor. xi. 23-25: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto

<sup>6</sup> κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, literally 'a Dominical Supper.'



you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread ; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you ; this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.”<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that the words, “after supper,”<sup>8</sup> occur only in connection with the giving of the cup, as though S. Paul meant his readers to understand that there was an interval between the administering of the bread and of the wine. The first two Gospels indeed, which in Semitic fashion record few details, relate nothing which is inconsistent with such a supposition ; the original text of S. Luke, however, describes first the giving of a cup without any statement as to its significance, and then the giving of the bread with the words, “ This is My Body.” In the ordinary text of S. Luke an attempt has been made to assimilate this account of the Institution to that which is given

<sup>7</sup> The quotation is from the Revised Version, but there is no warrant for supplying an accusative after the verb “ drink ” in the last clause.

<sup>8</sup> μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι.

by S. Paul in 1 Cor. xi., so that the cup is mentioned twice. The fact that S. Luke alone has preserved the words of our Lord given in xxii. 15, the authenticity of which there is no reason to doubt, is a strong reason against lightly setting aside his testimony, and it is remarkable that the order which he gives, first the cup and then the bread, appears also in that "church-manual of primitive Christianity or of some section of it"<sup>9</sup> commonly called the *Didache*. It is therefore possible that S. Luke's account reflects a usage which obtained for a time in certain districts. Some confirmation of S. Luke's order might be found in 1 Cor. x. 16, where the mention of the cup precedes that of the bread; but the passage is rhetorical, and its evidence does not outweigh that of 1 Cor. xi. 23-25, where the order is first the bread, then the cup. Moreover, in S. Luke's account, according to the original text, no adequate explanation is given of the administering of the cup to the Apostles. A reader of the English versions (R.V. as well as A.V.) might suppose the sense intended by the translators to be, "Do you for your part take this, and divide it among

<sup>9</sup> The description is Bishop Lightfoot's; see *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. i., p. 215.

yourselves, inasmuch as I for My part have determined not to drink any more of the fruit of the wine, till the kingdom of God shall come." In the Greek, however, there is no emphasis on the pronoun, nor is there anything to warrant the "will" for "shall" either in *v.* 18 or in *v.* 16. It is therefore not impossible that S. Luke's motive in placing the account of the cup before that of the bread is merely a *literary* one, that is to say, in order that the words, "For I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come," might be read immediately after the similar words, "For I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." S. Luke's omission of any reference to blood in connexion with the cup is most remarkable, especially as the *Didache* has a like omission; the discussion of its significance, however, must be postponed till later.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> S. Paul's term, 'the cup of blessing' (τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας), if it stood alone, might seem to support S. Luke and the *Didache*; but the Apostle goes on, "Is it not a communion of the Blood of Christ?" (οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ χριστοῦ;), and it would be a most far-fetched interpretation, which would explain this as meaning, "In partaking of the cup of blessing we are partakers of a grace which was only made available for us by the Blood of Christ." S. Paul undoubtedly regards the bread and the wine as representing in some sort the Body and Blood of Christ.



In the accounts of the giving of the bread there is considerable agreement between S. Paul and the Synoptists. In 1 Cor. xi. 24 the words are, "This is My Body which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."<sup>11</sup> S. Luke has simply "This is My Body," which in S. Mark appears as "Take, this is My Body,"<sup>12</sup> and in S. Matthew is expanded to "Take, eat, this is My Body."<sup>13</sup> All the accounts agree in representing our Lord as saying, "This is My Body," S. Paul's statement here differing from the others only in placing some emphasis on the possessive pronoun, and in representing our Lord as affirming that His Body was in some way bestowed on behalf of the disciples and as giving a command for the perpetuation of what He was then instituting.

The accounts of the words spoken at the giving of the cup, however, present more remarkable divergence. S. Paul quotes our Lord's words in the form, "This cup is the new covenant in My Blood; do this, as often as ye

<sup>11</sup> τοῦτο μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.

<sup>12</sup> λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.

<sup>13</sup> λάβετε, φάγετε, τοῦτο, κ.τ.λ.

drink, in remembrance of Me."<sup>14</sup> In the *original* text of S. Luke, as we have seen, no explanation of the cup is given. In S. Mark, our Lord's words are given thus: "This is My Blood of the covenant which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, that I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new in the kingdom of God."<sup>15</sup> In S. Matthew this is expanded as follows: "Drink ye all of it, for this is My Blood of the covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of My Father."<sup>16</sup>

It will thus be seen that the three accounts of the giving of the cup preserved by S. Paul,

<sup>14</sup> τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι, τοῦτο ποιεῖτε ὅσάκις ἂν πίνητε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.

<sup>15</sup> τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἶμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ πῖω ἐκ τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ὅταν αὐτὸ πίνω καινὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>16</sup> πῖετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες, τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἶμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἁφροσιν ἁμαρτιῶν· λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ πῖω ἀπ' ἄρτι ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ὅταν αὐτὸ πίνω μεθ' ὑμῶν καινὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου.

S. Mark, and S. Matthew respectively, agree in the mention of "the covenant"—S. Paul calls it "the new covenant"—but that otherwise there are serious divergencies between them. As in the case of the bread, S. Paul alone (not counting the interpolation in S. Luke xxii. 19-20, which is clearly based upon 1 Cor. xi. 24-25) represents our Lord as commanding the repetition of the rite; and, what is far more important, whereas S. Mark and S. Matthew agree in representing our Lord as stating that the cup was His Blood, however the phrase is to be understood, the words which S. Paul puts into the mouth of our Lord do not *necessarily* convey any such meaning. For the statement, "This cup is the new covenant in My Blood"<sup>17</sup> *may* mean (to adopt a paraphrase), "This cup by reason of My Blood (*i.e.* My violent death<sup>18</sup> at the hands of those who hold fast to the old covenant) symbolises the new covenant which I am inaugurating." To state the case briefly, whereas S. Mark and S. Matthew in some sense identify the contents of the cup with blood,

<sup>17</sup> τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἔμφαιματι.

<sup>18</sup> For this sense of "blood" cf. Rom. iii. 25, Acts xxii. 20.



S. Paul seems to avoid any such identification. Which then is the earlier form of the tradition, "This is the (new) covenant in My Blood," or "This is My Blood of the covenant"? Now, although S. Paul's account in 1 Cor. xi. does not necessarily imply any identification of the contents of the cup with blood, the impression produced by his words in the previous chapter (x. 16), "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the Body of Christ?"<sup>19</sup> and still more by those in 1 Cor. xi. 27, "Whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord,"<sup>20</sup> is more in harmony with the Evangelists' account than with that explanation of 1 Cor. xi. 25, which has been mentioned above as in itself possible. For though the phrase in x. 16, "communion of the Blood of Christ"<sup>21</sup> might conceivably mean a participation in the

<sup>19</sup> τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ χριστοῦ; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ ἐστίν;

<sup>20</sup> ὅς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον ἢ πίνη τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ κυρίου ἀναξίως, ἐνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου.

<sup>21</sup> κοινωνία τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ χριστοῦ.

effects produced by the violent death of Christ, it would be a far-fetched explanation of the phrase "guilty of the Blood of Christ," which would represent it as meaning that an unworthy partaker of the cup shares the guilt of those who were responsible for the violent death of Jesus. It seems therefore reasonable to suppose that S. Mark and S. Matthew, in identifying in some sense the contents of the cup with the Blood of Christ, represent primitive tradition.<sup>22</sup>

It is not however necessary to suppose that this tradition, primitive though it was, was *everywhere* embodied in the ceremonial Breaking of Bread in the earliest days of the Christian Church. Nothing is more remarkable than the absence from the *Didache* of any reference to the *institution* either of Baptism or of the Breaking of the Bread. Indeed, if the words, "Which Thou hast made known to us by Thy Child Jesus," were omitted, there would be nothing in the eucharistic prayer as given in

<sup>22</sup> There is probably no connexion between the cup of the Institution and the "cup" of the agony in Gethsemane. The latter seems to be based on Old Testament metaphor, *e.g.* Ps. xvi. 5.

chap. ix.<sup>23</sup> which would be out of place at a meal eaten by devout Jews who looked for the gathering together of the Dispersed of Israel and for the setting up of the kingdom of David. The prayer may actually be a modification of a

<sup>23</sup> The passages in the *Didache* which refers to the Holy Communion are as follows :

“ And as touching the *feast of Thanksgiving*, thus give ye thanks :

“ First, concerning the cup, We thank Thee, Our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy child, which Thou hast made known to us by Thy child Jesus. Thine be the glory for ever. And concerning the broken bread, We thank Thee, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou hast made known to us by Thy child Jesus. Thine be the glory for ever. As this broken bread was once scattered *in grains* upon the mountains, and being gathered together became one ; so let Thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth unto Thy kingdom. For Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

“ And let none eat or drink of your *feast of Thanksgiving*, but such as have been baptised in the name of the Lord ; for concerning this the Lord hath said, *Give not that which is holy to the dogs.*

“ And after being filled, thus give ye thanks :

“ We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which Thou hast made to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which Thou hast made known to us by Thy child Jesus. Thine be the glory for ever. Thou, O Almighty Sovereign, didst create all things for Thy name's sake, and gavest men food and drink to enjoy, that they might give thanks unto Thee ; but to us Thou didst graciously give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through

Jewish grace before or after meat, or of a synagogue thanksgiving for the bread and wine. So far as the *Didache* is concerned, there is no necessary connexion between the bread and wine of which Christians partake on the Lord's Day and

Thy child. Before all things we give thanks to Thee for that Thou art mighty. Thine is the glory for ever. Remember, O Lord, Thy church to deliver her from all evil and to perfect her in Thy love; and gather her together from the four winds, her that is sanctified unto Thy kingdom which Thou didst prepare for her. For Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any is holy, let him come; if any is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen." (cc. ix. and x.)

"And on each Lord's day of the Lord be ye gathered together and break bread and give thanks; after confessing your transgressions that our sacrifice may be pure. And let none that hath a difference with his fellows come together with you until they be reconciled, that our sacrifice be not defiled. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord, *In every place and time offer Me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and My name wonderful among the Gentiles.*" (c. xiv.)

The above extracts are from the edition by the late Dr. C. Taylor, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Cambridge, 1886.

Bishop Lightfoot (*The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 232) has translated *εὐχαριστία* "eucharistic thanksgiving." It may, however, be questioned whether at the very early date at which the *Didache* took shape the word *εὐχαριστία* had come to be used in so restricted a sense as is implied by such a rendering.



the Body and Blood of Christ,<sup>24</sup> nor is there any reference to the bloodshedding of Christ. It is not improbable that the *Didache* took shape in a community of Jewish Christians to whom any sort of identification of that which they ate and drank with human flesh and with blood was a serious stumbling block. In S. John vi. 52 we have sufficient evidence of the difficulty caused by our Lord's words to those who were inclined to take things literally.

But assuming that our Lord declared the bread to be His Body, and the wine His Blood, we must inquire what meaning His words would naturally bear in the ears of those to whom they were addressed. That they would not be understood literally must surely be plain to everyone who attempts to put himself into the place of the Apostles. For apart from the difficulty of supposing that the latter could understand the

<sup>24</sup> The mention of a *sacrifice* in the *Didache*, chap. xiv., is no proof that the Holy Communion was regarded as a representation of the sacrifice of Christ as the word *sacrifice* is commonly understood. It more naturally means "a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving"; that is to say, the word sacrifice is purely metaphorical, as, for example, in Heb. xiii. 16.

bread to be literally the Body of Christ and the wine His Blood, when He stood before them whole in His human Body, His Flesh unwounded, and His Blood unshed, the Jewish horror of eating blood and of everything savouring of human sacrifice would have been sufficient in itself to exclude a literal interpretation, and we are therefore shut up to a symbolical explanation. In S. Paul's teaching indeed the Church is the Body of Christ (*see* 1 Cor. xii. 27, Rom. xii. 5, Eph. i. 23, iv. 12, v. 23, 30, Col. i. 24), and in 1 Cor. x. 17 he sees in the one bread of the Communion Service a type of the oneness of the Church. But the conception of the Church as a Body having different members with different functions which was not unnatural in the days of S. Paul—had the Apostle ever heard the fable of Menenius Agrippa?—when the Church included many diverse elements was scarcely natural before our Lord's passion, when the Christian Church did not exist. Moreover if the Apostles had understood Jesus to mean "This bread symbolises the Church which is My Body," we should have expected that they would have recorded some other saying of Christ which would have prepared the way for such a conception; the Synoptic

Gospels, however, have nothing to tell us about the unity of the Church, nor do they identify it with the Body of Christ. Moreover, even on the assumption that the reading "which is broken for you" (1 Cor. xi. 24), if not original, gives the original sense, we should have expected our Lord's words to run thus: "This bread which is broken for you is My Body."

Another interpretation understands the words "This is My Body" as meaning, "This symbolises My actual human Body, which, as the bread is broken, is to be broken on your behalf." But in this case we should have expected greater emphasis to be laid on the breaking, whereas the statement that our Lord after blessing broke the bread merely implies that He distributed the bread.<sup>25</sup> The common text of 1 Cor. xi. 24 indeed, reads: "This is My Body which is broken for you."<sup>26</sup> and it must be admitted that "My Body which is for you" is a strange ex-

<sup>25</sup> It is true that Acts ii. 42, *cf.* v. 46, mentions 'the breaking of the bread' apparently as the name of the rite instituted by Christ; but 'breaking' appears to be merely a word for distribution, like the Heb. פָּרַס (פָּרַס) Isaiah lviii. 7, Lam. iv. 4.

<sup>26</sup> τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κλώμενον.

pression whether it be regarded as Aramaic or Greek. It is doubtless easier to account for the insertion of *κλώμενον* than for its omission, particularly in view of the fact that "the breaking of the bread" was the common name for the Holy Communion, although "broken" is not exactly the term which we should expect to be applied to a human body ; but we desiderate some passive participle as in the interpolated words (S. Luke xxii. 19), "which is given<sup>27</sup> for you." All that we can affirm is that our Lord declared that the bread was His Body, and that this Body was in some way bestowed on behalf of the disciples.

We therefore pass to the inquiry in what sense the words, "This is My Body," and "This is My Blood," could have been understood by the Apostles, when used of elements which the latter were required to eat and to drink. It is thought by some that the mention of a covenant in connexion with the Blood furnishes a clue, inasmuch as in ancient covenants a sacrificial meal formed part of the ratification (cf. Gen. xxxi. 44-54. Psal. l. 5). Against this interpretation, however, it may be urged that the phrase

<sup>27</sup> *διδόμενον*.



“Blood of the covenant,” which is most naturally understood as a quotation from, or at all events a reference to, the Old Testament, seems to rest on Exodus xxiv. 8 (cf. Zech. ix. 11), and that although it is previously stated (v. 5) that Moses “sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord,” the idea of a sacrificial meal in connexion with the blood covenant would not be at all prominent to most readers of the Old Testament in our Lord’s time. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, although he quotes Exodus xxiv. (with amplifications from Leviticus xiv.), says nothing about any covenant feast; and further, it is to be noted that Exodus xxiv. 11 does not connect the meal eaten by the nobles of the children of Israel in the presence of God with the preceding sacrifices. Moreover, even if the thought in our Lord’s mind were of a covenant meal, the words, “*My Body*,” “*My Blood*” would still remain unexplained. It is true that among some primitive people sacrifice involving the shedding of blood seems to rest, at all events in some cases, on the idea that the deity and his worshippers by partaking of the blood and of the raw flesh thereby receive into themselves

the life of the victim;<sup>28</sup> and there are traces in barbaric ritual of the idea that the victim represents the tribal god (see Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2nd ed., pp. 289 ff., 367 ff.); but even if it could be proved beyond question that such an idea underlies the Old Testament sacrifices, no one but a student of comparative religion would ever discover it or even think of

<sup>28</sup> It must not be overlooked that in the most primitive type of animal sacrifice *the worshippers as well as the deity* partook of the victim's life, which was supposed to be resident not only in the blood and internal fat, but also in the raw or, as the older Hebrew phrased it, the living flesh. The blood and the fat were reserved for the deity, not as alone containing the life, but as being the choicest and most potent portions. The worshippers partook of the same life, but in a less potent, and consequently in a less dangerous, form. Such a ceremony is not *mystical*, nor can it fairly be described as *magical*. The assimilation of the victim's life by those who partook of the sacrifice appears to have been regarded as a purely *physical* process, though one which could not safely be attempted without due precautions. But when the practice of cooking the sacrificial flesh was established, the idea of the worshippers' partaking of the life entirely disappeared, and not only is such a thing never so much as hinted at in the whole of the Old Testament, the fact that the eating of blood is stringently forbidden on the very ground that the blood contains the life (see especially Lev. xvii. 11) affords irrefutable proof that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament did not foreshadow, and was not intended to foreshadow, any sort of communion with God by partaking of a mystic life.

looking for it there<sup>29</sup>; and it must also be remembered that at this date our Lord's Apostles had certainly not identified Him with God; for there is a wide gulf between the "Son of the living God"<sup>30</sup> of S. Peter's confession (S. Matt. xvi. 16) and the "Very God"<sup>31</sup> of the Constantinopolitan Creed. It may

<sup>29</sup> In this connexion the words of Professor Percy Gardner (*Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. Mysteries Greek, Phrygian, etc., vol. 9, p. 82) convey a salutary warning. "It was of the essence of the mysteries to establish a way of communion between the votary and the saving deity who was the protector of the society. Sometimes this was accomplished by a sacred meal, such as many societies in Greece celebrated on fixed days at the tombs of founders of families and clans. At Eleusis the drinking of the draught called *κυκεών* was one of the most solemn acts of the festival. If we trace these meals of communion backwards we must suppose them to have originated in that ceremonial eating of the sacred animal or plant which belongs to the rudest tribes. But we must beware of the aberrations of a certain school of anthropologists who tend to overleap all the long series of changes which took place before these savage beliefs became humanised. These writers assume that the notion of a ceremonial eating of a divine victim persisted, not only into the more civilised pagan mysteries, but even into early Christianity. They take ancient religion at its lowest, not at its higher levels. Magic and materialism no doubt persisted, but all the nobler spirits warred against them."

<sup>30</sup> ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος.

<sup>31</sup> Θεὸν ἀληθινόν.

certainly be questioned whether the reading "the Church of God which He purchased with His own Blood,"<sup>32</sup> Acts xx. 28, is the correct reading.

On the other hand, the mention of blood in connexion with a covenant undoubtedly suggests *sacrificial* blood ; for "blood" in the sense of "violent death" or "murder" is not likely to have been symbolised by wine.<sup>33</sup> But, as was pointed out by Robertson Smith,<sup>34</sup> the wine of the drink offering seems to have been a surrogate for sacrificial blood. This is certainly suggested by the words of Ben Sira (Eccles. i. 15), and the phrase "the blood of the grape" goes back to Gen. xlix. 11. A devout Jew in the time of our Lord would therefore find no difficulty in regarding wine as a substitute for, or, at all events, a type of, sacrificial blood, and

<sup>32</sup> διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.

<sup>33</sup> This is true notwithstanding those passages in which lust for blood or a glut of bloodshed is compared to eagerness for wine or drunkenness (as in Zech. ix. 15, where the correct reading doubtless is "and they shall drink their blood like wine," cf. Isaiah xxxiv. 6, Rev. xvii. 6), or those in which the trampling upon foes is represented by the metaphor of treading grapes in the wine press (as in Isaiah lxiii. 3 ; cf. Rev. xiv. 19).

<sup>34</sup> *Rel. Sem.*, p. 330.



it is scarcely necessary to say that, although the drinking of any real blood (sacrificial or otherwise) would have seemed to be absolutely abominable,<sup>35</sup> he would have no scruples in drinking that which was lawful in itself, and which was associated with religious usage, always provided that he did not take literally the comparison of it to blood.

But if our Lord in speaking of the wine as His "Blood" made use of sacrificial language, it is reasonable to suppose that the description of the bread as His "Body" must also be understood as based on sacrificial usage. Now sacrifices involving the shedding of blood fall into two main classes: (1) Those in which the victim is wholly consumed by fire, the "burnt offering" (*ôlā*); (2) Those in which the flesh of the victim forms a meal, the "sacrifice" (*zebhaḥ*) or "peace-offerings" (*shēlāmīm*). Of these two classes the first may be ruled out if of connexion with the present inquiry; for though the phrase "food (*lit.* bread) of an offering made by fire" actually occurs (Lev iii. 11, 16, cf. Mal. i. 7), it is used with reference, not to the "burnt offering," but to that portion of

<sup>35</sup> See Gen. ix. 4, Lev. xvii. 10ff., 1 Sam. xiv. 32ff., Ezek. xxxiii. 25, Zech. ix. 11.

the "sacrifice" or "peace offerings" which Jehovah took as His share. The *phraseology* clearly goes back to a time when Jehovah and His worshippers were supposed to partake of a common meal, the worshippers eating their portion, and Jehovah's portion being etherealised by fire. If the flesh of the "burnt offering," however, was ever regarded as the deity's food, the idea scarcely remains in Old Testament phraseology in which the "burnt offering" is described as a "sweet savour unto Jehovah." We have therefore to consider the second class of sacrifices, viz. those in which the flesh of the victim forms a meal.

In pre-Deuteronomic days sacrifices of this latter type appear to have been the more common. Every feast involved a sacrifice, for no domestic animal could be slain for food except at a sanctuary.<sup>36</sup> After the drawing up of the Deuteronomic law, however, which allowed the slaughter of domestic animals anywhere, and only required that the blood should

<sup>36</sup> This is clear from the statement (Deut. xii. 15) that henceforth the people may kill and eat "flesh"—the whole context shews that the flesh of domestic animals is meant—in any place as in the case of game, and that ceremonial uncleanness is no bar to participation.

be poured out upon the ground, the *sacrificial* meal (*zebḥah*) naturally became less and less frequent, its place being taken by the ordinary meal, the meat of which involved no sacrificial offering of the blood or fat. Apart from the somewhat doubtful case of the offerings mentioned in Acts xxi. 26 (cf. Num. vi. 13-21), there is no mention in the New Testament of the offering of any "sacrifice" (*zebḥah*) as distinct from the "burnt offering" (*ôlā*), and we may certainly assume that the "sacrifice" was not a common feature of the *normal* religious life of the Jews.<sup>37</sup>

To this general rule, however, there was one important exception. Once a year a "sacrifice of the second class,"<sup>38</sup> though with peculiar features, remained obligatory to all who were able to go up to Jerusalem. The passover lamb was a true "sacrifice,"<sup>39</sup> for it could only be slain at the Temple, where its blood was

<sup>37</sup> At the passover, indeed, and perhaps at the other great feasts, a *voluntary* "peace-offering" known as *Chagigah* could be made by individuals. The animal was slain at the sanctuary, but the flesh, with the exception of the priests' portion, belonged to the sacrific. See Streane, *Chagigah*, pp. 147 f.

<sup>38</sup> *i.e.* a זבֶּחַ.

<sup>39</sup> It is actually called a זבֶּחַ in Exodus xxxiv. 25.

sprinkled upon the altar by the priests ; it was, however, cooked and eaten, not in the precincts of the Temple, but in the homes or temporary homes of the worshippers. At the strictly sacrificial part of the rite only that member of the family or household would be present who was responsible for taking the lamb to the Temple and bringing back the carcass to be roasted at home. Accordingly, to the majority of those who kept passover at Jerusalem the paschal meal was no more associated with the altar than is an ordinary meal among ourselves with the slaughter house. Attention was concentrated rather on the historical institution of the passover in Egypt, that is to say, on the great epoch in Israel's history when the Lord had brought His people out of Egypt "with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm."

The deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage was to the Jew what the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is to the Christian. It was the basis of Jehovah's claim to Israel's whole-hearted devotion. As such it occupies a foremost position in the Decalogue : "I am Jehovah thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen ; thou shalt have none other God but Me." It



was something more than mere pride of race which endeared the passover to the Jew. Who that loves freedom, or is excited by the thought of victory, can read unmoved the immortal story of Israel's deliverance? Fighter and pacifist alike must feel pulses quickened at the magnificent triumph song, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He cast into the sea."

We need feel no surprise therefore that our Lord desired to eat the passover with His Apostles before the blow which He knew to be imminent should fall. It has too often been supposed that Jesus took part in the rites of the Jewish Church merely to encourage others; but any such supposition is to ignore His true Humanity. It is certain that He was a critic—a drastic critic indeed—of the Jewish law. There was much in it that He desired to change; but so long as it lasted, He was ready to make the most of it, and to derive spiritual benefit from its various ordinances. And surely, as He approached the great crisis of His fate, of all the ordinances of the law none would appeal to Him so strongly as that which commemorated Israel's deliverance from death and escape from

bondage into freedom. He felt that He Himself—with all reverence we may say it—as well as His Apostles, needed the spiritual strengthening of the commemoration which year by year taught successive generations that God can deliver His own from death, and can transport them out of a helpless bondage into a life of freedom and strength. From an earthly point of view the position of Jesus and His Apostles was desperate; the sword of the angel of death was extended over them; was it not therefore natural that Jesus should look forward to the commemoration of the time when the Lord had shewn Himself mighty to save?

And here it is necessary to call attention again to that saying recorded by S. Luke only, to which I have already referred: "With desire I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."<sup>40</sup> The translators of the English versions (Revised as well as Authorised) have here entirely missed the point. Not only have they translated the Aorist as though it were a Perfect, but they have failed to recognise the force of the un-Greek phrase "with desire I desired".<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν.

<sup>41</sup> ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα.

It is evident that we have here an attempt to represent in Greek an idiom which is found in both Hebrew and Aramaic, whereby, when it is desired to put emphasis upon a finite verb, the infinitive of the same verb is added to the finite tense. Whenever this idiom occurs in Hebrew or Aramaic, it is always possible to represent the sense in English, without employing any adverb, merely by an emphatic pronunciation of the verb. Thus "With desire I desired" means simply "I *desired*." But as soon as the sentence is read with this emphasis, its original meaning becomes clear. The emphasis on the word "desired" suggests that in the present case the desire is contrasted with its non-fulfilment; in other words, that the desire cannot be carried out. It was unnecessary for our Lord to add, "But what I desired will not be fulfilled"; for after the emphasis on "I desired," the non-fulfilment of the desire is naturally expressed by an *aposiopesis*. Accordingly our Lord goes on to develop the thought suggested by the words "before I suffer"; "for I say unto you that I shall not eat it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Jesus had come to Jerusalem conscious of the fact that the Pharisees would stick at nothing in

their fanatical hatred of His liberal theology, and that the blind nationalism of His followers must draw down upon Him the hostility of the Sadducees. He had been comparatively safe in Galilee, for, as He had said with playful irony, "a prophet could not perish out of Jerusalem." But Jerusalem had ever killed the prophets, and had stoned those that had been sent to her, and now it was the turn of Jesus to experience a like fate. But that which He had foreseen when He set His face to go to Jerusalem, had come about even more speedily than He had anticipated. One of His own Apostles had turned traitor. Near as the passover was—only twenty-four hours distant—He, Jesus, would not be alive to take part in its celebration. The Apostles other than the traitor had not realised the imminence of the danger, and now, at what He knows will be their last meal with Him, Jesus tells them plainly of the position in which He is placed. What appears to be the meaning of the condensed record of His words, in view of the circumstances in which they were spoken, can best be set forth in a paraphrase :

*Convinced as I have long been that My mission can only end in My death, and knowing that My fate may involve you, and that in any case your*



*faith will be sorely tried, I desired to celebrate this coming passover with you. I desired for you and for Myself the spiritual tonic of the commemoration of that which God did for our fathers in Egypt, when the blood of the passover lamb brought to the household where it was sprinkled deliverance from death by the sword of the destroying angel, and when in the strength of their meal on the flesh of the lamb the Israelites went on the long march which terminated in freedom on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. But it is not to be. The blow which I have long anticipated will fall sooner than I expected. I shall not be able to eat the passover with you to-morrow; for I tell you plainly, I shall not eat it again in this life, although I know that the victory which it symbolises will be celebrated in the kingdom of God. But in spite of all this, the desire which I came up to Jerusalem to gratify need not be disappointed. That for which the passover stands is not true only on one night of the year; for those who trust God know that He is with them always, and that at all times He can deliver them from the sting of death, and can give them strength for that through which He leads them. And therefore by faith we may have the same blessing at this our last supper together, ordinary meal though it is, as*

*if it were actually the passover feast. We may indeed make it our passover. There is no magical efficacy either in the passover blood sprinkled on the altar or in the flesh of the passover lamb eaten at home. It is the thing symbolised, not the mere symbol, which edifies, and if that be apprehended, the precise character of the symbol itself is of small account. This bread will serve as well for our spiritual strengthening as the actual flesh of the passover lamb. This wine, "the blood of the grape," will represent to us the passover blood. In eating the one and in drinking the other we may by faith obtain a blessing in no wise less than would be ours if we ate the actual flesh of the passover lamb, and if its blood were sprinkled on the lintel and posts of the door of our house, as at the first passover, or upon the altar in the Temple. But if that which is symbolised by the passover is life and strength, what is the true source of such a blessing? Is it not God? Those who trust Him are assured that death cannot overwhelm them, and that He will give them strength to endure that which He requires them to undergo. Those who trust God therefore do truly keep the passover feast; and accordingly the means whereby they attain to this life-giving energising trust does for them what the flesh and*

*blood of the passover lamb, in the story of the Exodus, did for the fathers. And since I have come to help you, by the teaching of My life and by the example of My death, to have this saving trust in God, you may regard Me as your Passover Lamb. We have agreed that this bread shall represent to us the passover flesh, and this wine the passover blood—that is, if I am the true Passover Lamb, My Flesh and My Blood. Take, eat, therefore; this is My Body; drink ye all of this cup; this is My Blood. And as the passover in Egypt was the beginning of a new relation between the Lord and Israel, or, in Hebrew language, a “covenant,” which was afterwards ratified by sacrificial blood, this wine will also be to you a symbol of that new and better relation with God which will be theirs who come with faith through the crisis of My death. I am indeed your Passover Lamb slain for you. Henceforth when you eat bread and drink wine, remember what I have said and done this night, and do it in remembrance of Me.*

That the words “This is My Body,” “This is My Blood” imply a representation of Christ as the true Passover Lamb is probable in view of the date at which the Last Supper was eaten, whether it was the night before the passover

or the passover night itself. This interpretation, however, is confirmed by other considerations. In the first place, S. Paul, writing to the Corinthians (I Cor. v. 8) says, "For our Passover also was sacrificed, even Christ."<sup>42</sup> It is true that S. Paul is led to this assertion by the figure of leaven which he has just used, and to which he returns immediately afterwards; but it seems unlikely that he would have thrown out, merely by the way, so remarkable a thought as the comparison of Christ to a Jewish sacrifice, if the Corinthian Christians had never before heard of any such comparison.

Moreover, if our Saviour compared Himself to the passover lamb, we have a natural explanation of certain sacrificial figures which are applied to Him, and which otherwise it is difficult to account for. The most remarkable phrase in this connexion is that which the Fourth Gospel puts into the mouth of the Baptist:] "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"<sup>43</sup> (S. John i. 29, cf. v. 36). Obviously the words are metaphorical; but what is the origin of the metaphor? The phrase "The Lamb of God" may,

<sup>42</sup> καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός.

<sup>43</sup> Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.



of course, mean either (1) the lamb provided by God, or (2) the Lamb claimed by, or offered to, God. The first interpretation would recall Genesis xxii. 8<sup>44</sup>; it is however improbable that the origin of the phrase should be looked for here, inasmuch as in the New Testament the story of the attempted sacrifice of Isaac is never brought into connexion with the death of Christ. The second alternative is the more probable, and a somewhat similar phrase occurs in Exodus xii. 27, "it is a passover sacrifice to Jehovah."<sup>45</sup> But here there is a difficulty: the words, "which taketh away (*or* beareth) the sins of the world," in whatever sense they are understood, are not the natural sequence of the phrase "the Lamb of God." They suggest either a victim slain as a sin offering, or else that type of ritual of which the Day of Atonement provides the most familiar example, viz. the transference of sins to a live creature which is regarded as bearing them away.

But neither of these ideas is in harmony with the figure of a lamb. Although a *ewe* lamb may

<sup>44</sup> God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.

<sup>45</sup> יִזְבַּח פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה

be presented as a sin offering (Lev. iv. 32), it is not the most usual victim, which is in the case of the anointed priest or of the whole congregation a young ox (Lev. iv. 1-21), in the case of a ruler a male goat (*ibid.* vv. 22-26), in the case of one of the common people a female goat (vv. 27-31) or a ewe lamb (vv. 32-35). See also Lev. v. 1-6. It is unlikely that the Baptist or any one else who desired to represent our Lord as a sacrificial victim taking away the sin of the *world* would select as an illustration a victim only legitimate in the case of a single individual, and, even so, not the one commanded as the first choice. It is noteworthy that Hebrews ix. contains no reference to any lamb. A similar difficulty occurs in connexion with the ritual of the Day of Atonement where there is no mention of any lamb as a sin-offering. The phrase "that taketh away (*or* beareth) the sin of the world" might be regarded as reminiscent of Isaiah liii. 12, "He bare the sin of many";<sup>46</sup> it is however important to notice that, when the Servant of the Lord is compared to a lamb in this chapter (v. 7), it is not a *sacrificial* lamb that is thought of, the point of the figure being the unresisting

<sup>46</sup> חטא רבים נשא

helplessness of a lamb before its butcher.<sup>47</sup> It is indeed improbable that there is in this whole section concerning the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah lii. 13, liii.) any *sacrificial* imagery. The word "sprinkle" (lii. 15) is undoubtedly corrupt, and so are the words rendered, "when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin"<sup>48</sup> (v. 10). In the latter place, even if the text were sound the translation would be wrong, for *āshām* denotes not the sin offering but that class of sacrifice technically known as the guilt offering, which "seems to have been confined to offences against God or man that could be estimated and so covered by compensation." (Oxford Lex. s.v.)

But when people had become accustomed to set forth our Saviour's work in terms of a sacrifice in which the ordinary victim was a lamb, so that He was spoken of as "the Lamb of God," it is not difficult to imagine that such a phrase might be extended later to include a comparison with sacrifices in which some other victim was prescribed; the Paschal Lamb giving deliverance from death and strength to endure,

<sup>47</sup> כֶּשֶׁד לִמְבוֹח יִבֹּל מִבֹּחַ is never in the Old Testament used of sacrificial slaughter.

<sup>48</sup> אִם חֲשִׁים אֲשֶׁם בַּפֶּסֶח (v. 10).

being represented somewhat later as a sin-offering taking away the sin of the world.<sup>49</sup> If this view is correct, the words which S. Matthew adds to S. Mark's account of the Institution, viz. "unto remission of sins,"<sup>50</sup> will mark the development of thought about the meaning of the death of Christ, which in S. John i. 29 is set forth in sacrificial terms.

Another reference to Christ as a Lamb whose blood is shed is found in 1 Peter i. 19. The fact that the metaphor of the Lamb is not here further developed implies that it was a familiar one. There is indeed here nothing definitely to connect the Lamb with the passover rather than with any other sacrifice, but the words "ye were redeemed . . . with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," suggest the former, inasmuch as "redemption" occurs as a metaphor for the deliverance from Egypt, *e.g.* in Micah vi. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Having regard to the way in which Old Testament phrases are quoted in the New Testament without regard to their original context, it cannot be considered certain, though it is extremely probable that the author of the Fourth Gospel in xix. 36 identified our Lord with the Passover lamb; cf. Ex. xii. 46, Num. ix. 12.

<sup>50</sup> εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.



Most striking, however, is the use of the term "the Lamb" in the Apocalypse ; note especially v. 6, 9. There is no reason to suppose that there is any special significance in the choice of the word *ἀρνίον* instead of *ἀμνός*. The two passages, 1 Pet. i. 19 and Rev. xiii. 8, can scarcely be entirely unrelated, and *ἀμνός* is found in the first, *ἀρνίον* in the second.<sup>51</sup>

There remains however the perplexing problem of the omission in the Fourth Gospel of any account of the Blessing of the Bread and the Wine, and the substitution for it of the account of the feet washing. The first two Gospels contain nothing parallel to the latter ; but in S. Luke xxii. 24-27 we have a discourse of Jesus which suits the occasion of the feet washing. At first sight a dispute about precedence at such a time seems almost incredible. The Apostles, however, were still far from realising their danger, and there may well have been some trifling dispute as to precedence, or some discussion as to who should be first in the kingdom so eagerly looked for. But the Fourth Evangelist in making much of the lesson of the feet washing, and in ignoring the Blessing of the Bread and

<sup>51</sup> Josephus (*Ant.* iii. 8, § 10) uses *αρνιον* of sacrificial lambs of a year old.

the Wine, must have acted deliberately. He has put a Sacrament of Service in place of the Sacrament of the Bread and the Wine. At the same time he has shewn his familiarity with the latter; for in his account of the discourse at Capernaum (S. John vi.) he has put into our Lord's mouth phraseology which can scarcely have arisen except from the Holy Communion. It may be that when the Fourth Gospel took shape, a tendency was manifest to regard the Holy Communion as of the same nature as a pagan "mystery," and that the author deliberately transferred the language to an occasion when literal eating and drinking were not to be thought of.

This however brings us to a question which some may perhaps think should have been asked first of all. Can we find in the Institution of the Holy Communion that idea which is common to some forms of primitive religion and to the "mystery" religions, viz. the idea of partaking of the Divine nature through eating or drinking, or bathing in, or through some other physical connexion with, that which represents it? In view of the Old Testament, to ask such a question is to answer it in the negative. Whatever be the *origin* of the Old Testament

sacrifices and kindred rites—and Robertson Smith's theory of covenant-making through participation in a mystic life has far more to be said for it than is sometimes allowed—there is no hint in the Old Testament of any *recollection* of such an origin, if it be the origin. Even where sacrifice is regarded as a covenantal rite (e.g. Ex. xxiv. 5f., Psa. l. 5, Zech. ix. 11), there is no hint as to the *way* in which a covenant could be brought about by sacrifice. An anthropologist sees the significance of the descriptions in Gen. xv. 9-17, Jer. xxxiv. 18; but it may fairly be doubted whether those who thus made a covenant understood the significance of what they did. Probably to them it was a rite which had come down from their fathers, and they did not trouble themselves about its *rationale*. In like manner no explanation is given in the Old Testament of the rite of circumcision, and metaphors based upon it shew that its original significance was entirely lost.

In seeking an interpretation of the words of Christ, we must not go outside Jewish literature and Jewish custom, and, further, we must remember that we are considering an event which took place not when the influence of the "mystery" religions was at its height, but in

the first half of the first century of the Christian era. Even if our Lord and His Apostles had any acquaintance with the "mystery" religions of the time, these would have been to them so foreign that we may safely ignore them when inquiring into the meaning of the Institution of the Holy Communion in the Upper Room.

It is, of course, conceivable that S. Paul in writing to the Corinthians, set forth the Holy Communion in terms of the "mystery" religions, but such a supposition is by no means necessary. S. Paul never applies the word *mystery*<sup>52</sup> to Baptism or to the Holy Communion or to any form of sacrament, and it is extremely unlikely that he would have adopted from the "mystery" religions certain sacramental ideas, while using the word *mystery* itself in an entirely different connexion. But even if it could be taken for granted that S. Paul's mind was saturated with "mystery" ideas, we are concerned not with the interpretation of Christ's Institution to men of Gentile birth and upbringing who might have seen in the great Christian sacrament a superficial resemblance to pagan rites with which they themselves were familiar, *but with the thought of those who were*

<sup>52</sup> μυστήριον.



*gathered together in the Upper Room*—men who from infancy had been trained to shun everything savouring of heathenism. To ascribe to Palestinian Jews whose education, such as it was, was entirely Jewish, and who were deeply imbued with Jewish nationalist ideas, a religious syncretism implying, to say the least, a most sympathetic study of non-Jewish religions is entirely to misunderstand the whole background of the Gospel history. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that *what our Saviour said to His disciples on that memorable night was meant to be intelligible to them then and there*. They could not perceive its full significance any more than they could perceive the full meaning of the injunction which their Master had previously given them, “After this manner pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven.” It was, however, sufficiently intelligible to them. Loyal Jews as they were, they felt it unnecessary to say, “Lord, Moses has forbidden us to drink any blood; how then can we drink Thy Blood? or how canst Thou give us Thy Flesh to eat?”

There can be little doubt that in the development of Christianity among the Gentiles many ideas of pagan origin were grafted on to the

teaching of Christ. Such ideas may in themselves be true or erroneous, but they cannot alter the original meaning of that which was taught by the Founder of Christianity Himself. The graft cannot change the character of the stock on which it is grafted. A peach graft may flourish on an almond stock, but this does not alter the fact that the natural purpose of the almond stock is to produce almonds and not peaches. A peach may be more highly prized than an almond; but the fruit of any graft from paganism, even though it were good in itself, must be inferior to the fruit of the tree of the original teaching of Christ. Why then should we prune away the best in order to produce the inferior? Let us seek first and last and always to be loyal to the original meaning of Him who said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

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W. HEFFER & SONS LTD.,  
CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.















